



FOCUS

JULY 2022 - MMXXII ISSUE VII

735 RIDGE LAKE BOULEVARD | MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE 38120



Hard-Wired

by Pastor Jim Fleming

**Teaser: Hard-hearts? Definitely Bad!
Hard-foreheads? Maybe good! God is just the one
to give us the gift of hard-foreheads that serve a
really good purpose. We're gonna need 'em!**

But I have sent you to them who should listen to you; yet the house of Israel will not be willing to listen to you, since they are not willing to listen to Me. Surely the whole house of Israel is stubborn and obstinate. Behold, I have made your face as hard as their faces and your forehead as hard as their foreheads. Like emery harder than flint I have made your forehead (Ezekiel 3:6b-9).

When God commissions the prophet Ezekiel, He doesn't hide the fine print. This is going to be a tough assignment. God is asking Ezekiel to tackle the job of communicating a message that no one wants to hear, and resistance will be the norm for the entirety of Ezekiel's ministry. (This would eventually change, but not in Ezekiel's lifetime!)

Here is the fascinating part—God has “hard-wired” Zeke for perseverance! The hardness of the people's hearts will be matched by Ezekiel's commitment to stay faithful to his message. They may not listen to what he has to say, but they will not, by their resistance, cow him into silence.

We, as God's people, are facing great challenges. Building a strong base of ministry and advancing the Kingdom in the community, these are daunting assignments. Our message may not be popular. Who wants to be told that they have a major problem called sin? We may not be getting a lot of “likes” and we could easily go silent.

But we can ask God to do the same for us that He did for Zeke: “Lord, please hard-wire us for perseverance. Though the challenges may be daunting, may they be matched by surpassing perseverance. God, please make our resolve like emery harder than flint! Give us the ‘holy stubbornness’ to stay steady-on until the job is done.”

ELDER WORDS



Giving Grace

by Ken Eriksen
Transition Committee Chairman

Reflection is good. We can look back and see ways we could have done something better. But we might also see ways we caused others pain. The Transition Committee has spared no effort to take an honest look at our previous season as a church. We have identified some clear and significant ways we could improve. And, yes, that look back has sometimes made us wince.

The beauty of the gospel is that we are not locked into our past. God is at work in us and He can make us better, from the inside out. He gives us a new heart and then helps us use words and deeds to express that heart. In Ephesians 4:29, Paul gives us a glimpse of how this works. *Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear (Ephesians 4:29).* We have been saved by grace. But to receive Jesus as Savior is to also be given the power to use our words to build up, not tear down, one another. We do this by using words to communicate grace.

Our culture is quite fluent in the language of hate, slander, and malice. But all who are in Christ have the power to use their words to impart to others undeserved favor and kindness. We can use our words to actually build others up! This amazing truth is what informs the current efforts of our Transition Committee. We are actively identifying situations, incidents, and relationships that are crying out for words of grace. We are making great headway in speaking grace into that history and hope to soon give you a glimpse of what God is doing.

The Transition Committee is working through “Give Grace”, one of our six vital challenges. Learn more about becoming a people On Mission and the six vital challenges at www.firstevan.org/on-mission.

We are also planning a sermon series that is designed to help us as a congregation deepen our fluency in the language of grace. This five-sermon series will kick off on July 10. You will come away with a much greater ability to use grace in your relationships with your spouse, family, friends, and fellow followers of Jesus. When a people are fluent in the language of grace, people around us will want to know our secret. Prepare to give them something to marvel at.

LEADERSHIP

SESSION WHO'S WHO?

The Session elected officers for 2022-23 and populated committees in its last meeting. Here is an overview of who will be doing what. We are especially excited about two groups: Polity and Doctrine and the Shepherding Council. The Polity and Doctrine Committee will help us better apply truth to challenges we face. The Shepherding Council will grow and strengthen our efforts to shepherd God's flock well. These are just some of the ways we want to Work Smart in our next season as a church. *Next month we will highlight our deacons.*

Elder Officers and Committee Assignments 2022-2023

Session Officers



Kevin Weaver
Session Chairman
Finance & Personnel
Pastoral Search Committee



Ken Eriksen
Session Vice-Chairman
Finance & Personnel
Transition Committee Chairman



Buddy Jones
Session Secretary
Polity & Doctrine
Transition Committee

Polity & Doctrine Committee



Bryan Miller
Committee Chairman

Jim Fleming
Pastoral Guidance

Committee Members

Mark Gosney

Chip Barger

Buddy Jones

Steve Atkins

John Touliatos

Andy Pierce

Shepherding Council



Steve Boyd
Council Chairman

Taylor Park
Pastoral Guidance

Committee Members

Buzz Fly

Pat Person

John Reid Curlin

JP Hickey

Joel Scoggins

Pastoral Search Committee*



Eric Fuhrman
Committee Chairman

Jim Fleming
Pastoral Guidance

Kevin Weaver
Session Chairman

Transition Committee*

Ken Eriksen
Chairman

Jim Fleming
Pastoral Guidance

Committee Members

Buddy Jones

Bryan Miller

Global Missions Team



Robert Seay
Session Representative

**These committees have been formed by the Session, but include some non-session members.*

CHURCH-WIDE

YOUNG ADULTS

NEW ON STAFF



Olivia Grace Sistrunk

Summer Young Adults Intern

Olivia Grace was raised at First Evan since she was 4 years old and this church feels like home to her. She is an elementary music teacher during the school year, sings in the church choir, and assists with vocals in the band on Sundays.

She is “thrilled to help the Young Adult Ministry thrive and am so thankful for Kassie Sanborn and Andrew Beach for giving me this opportunity. This age group, that I am still in, is a crucial one. I hope to make this community a place where 20-somethings and college students can feel at home as they navigate adult life and deep spiritual questions. I am pumped to be here for the summer for sure! Come swing by the Break room and hang out with us!”



Discover First Evan

Sunday, August 28

4:00–6:00 p.m., Chapel

This class is offered to those interested in learning more about First Evan or desiring membership. Attending the class in no way obligates you to join, but it is the first step toward membership. Questions can be directed to Jacki Stieferman at jstieferman@firstevan.org. Sign up at www.firstevan.org/dfc.



“In the Know” Meeting

If you missed the meeting on Sunday, June 26, please visit www.firstevan.org/on-mission and watch the recording and read the action steps and plan. Please continue praying for our transition. The Zoom First Evan Prayer Focus is every Sunday from 5:00–5:30 p.m. [Click here to join the meeting.](#) **Zoom Meeting ID:** 863 8809 4094; **Passcode:** 758395.

WORSHIP



Our First “On Mission” Sermon Series: “Graces of Reconciliation”

Sundays, July 10–August 14

If you came to the [“In The Know” Meeting](#), you heard how the Transition Committee is helping men and women apply grace to our history. God is at work helping us get to a better place and become a people who are fluent in the language of grace. They are calling for us, as a congregation, to embrace the use of grace to build healthy relationships.

Toward this end, the pastors and staff of First Evan are preparing for a special summer sermon series. Come prepared to learn the art of using grace well and thereby demonstrating our identity as ambassadors of grace. Come prepared to listen to the prompting of His Spirit as He gives us insight into how we can do better.

Baptism

Sunday, July 31

10:45 a.m., Sanctuary

If you are interested in baptism, please apply by **Friday, July 8**, or contact Paige Poloni at ppoloni@firstevan.org.



Fair Game (Small Group)

Tuesdays, July 5, 12, 19, and 26
7:00 p.m., The Hall's House

All young adults are welcome to join as we openly discuss young adult's questions such as: *Did God create evil? Should guns be banned? Why is homosexuality treated differently than other sins in the church?* and more! This is a safe and welcoming space. Message Kassie Sanborn at kсанborn@firstevan.org for the address and/or details.



Discovery Bible Study

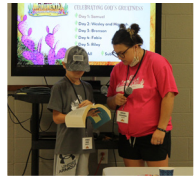
This summer, the Young Adult ministry has been hosting a weekly Discovery Bible study and free lunch on the U of M campus. They have been inviting the international students from the Intensive English for Internationals program. Each week they've made better relational connections and had more open conversations about Jesus and scripture, and even taught different words in English. Please pray for the students attending these Bible studies. Pray for seeds to be planted and hearts stirred among the believers and non-believers.

MEN

Men's Bible Study led by Buddy Jones

SAVE THE DATE: Mondays, September 12–December 5
6:30–8:00 p.m., Fellowship Hall
Wednesdays, September 14–December 7, 6:30–7:30 a.m., Zoom

FEC KIDS



VBS: Monumental – Celebrating God's Goodness

Thank you, First Evan, for a truly Monumental VBS Week! It was a fun week FULL of surprises as we learned about our Awesome God through the study of the life of Joseph. And our FEC Kids raised **\$1,877.10 for Bibles for the Child Evangelism Fellowship 5-Day Clubs—that's about 1,251 Bibles!** It was the closest ever boys vs. girls fundraising battle—the boys won by just \$5! We are so proud of everyone for working hard to help get Bibles into the hands of kids in our city! Thank you for your generosity and for entrusting us with your kids during VBS week. It was our pleasure to get to hang out with them and share the gospel with them—we loved every minute and hope they did, too. If you didn't get a chance to attend our VBS service, we encourage you to [click here](#) to watch as a family.



Join Our Team!

We are actively recruiting teachers and helpers for our fall 2022–2023 school year. Please contact Cortney Cannon at ccannon@firstevan.org to volunteer!



Promotion Sunday

SAVE THE DATE: Sunday, August 7
FEC Kids in nursery–4th grade will promote to the next class. Arrive early to meet the teachers.

A LOOK AT JULY

- JULY 3 God Provided for Ruth (Ruth)
- JULY 10 God Provided for Hannah (1 Sam 1–3)
- JULY 17 Eli's Son Disobeyed God (Judges 2)
- JULY 24 God Takes Sin Seriously (Judges 13–16)
- JULY 31 From Unity to Division

Memory Verse:

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 6:23

Big Picture Question:

*What is the fair payment for sin?
The fair payment for sin is death.*



Terrific Tuesdays

Tuesdays, July 5, 12, 19, 26
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m., East Lawn or
inside depending on weather
Join us for fun and fellowship for all
ages! Activities vary weekly. Email
feckids@firstevan.org for more details.



Pastor's Pals

Thursday, July 14, 9:00 a.m. –
12:30 p.m., Meet at First Evan
Join us for a field trip for rising 1st–5th
graders with Executive Pastor, Taylor
Park. We will drive to Sweet Lala's for
a kitchen tour, cookie decorating class,
and pizza lunch (Limited to 24 kids).
Email feckids@firstevan.org to sign up.

Thursday, July 21, 12:30 p.m. –
2:00 p.m. Meet at First Evan
Join us for a field trip for rising 1st–
5th graders with Worship Pastor, Ken
Boer. We will go to FunQuest in Col-
lierville for bowling and pizza. Email
feckids@firstevan.org to sign up.



FEC Kids End of Summer Skate Party

Thursday, July 28, 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Cordova Skating Center
FEC Kids celebration for all ages! Ages
five and under must be accompanied by
an adult. Email feckids@firstevan.org
to sign up.



ESCRA Soccer

6-Game Season: Saturdays,
September 10–October 22
Cost: \$65 (includes uniform)
Boys and girls ages 4–12 (divisions
based on ages as of June 1, 2022) are
invited to play with us! Register by
August 10 at www.firstevan.org/soccer.

Canvas Art Class

Tuesdays, August 9–September 13
6:00–7:30 p.m., E144 | Cost: \$60
Brian Brock will walk participants
through a six-week painting series that
focuses on our relationship with God.
Details and registration (July 31 dead-
line) at www.firstevan.org/canvas.

CARE

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED! He Cares Ministry



We are looking for someone to restart
and coordinate our He Cares Ministry.
We also need one or two retired nurses
on campus for this gathering. This is a
special ministry designed to meet the
needs of our seniors desiring more
fellowship. We meet monthly from
10:00 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. for a day of arts/
crafts, devotional/prayer time, com-
munion, and lunch. Every “Dear One”
is assigned to at least one caregiver that
stays with them throughout the day.
This is also a ministry for the care-
givers of the “Dear Ones” who can have
a day to run errands, shop, or just take
a nap. If interested in volunteering,
please contact Jim Henry at jhenry@firstevan.org
or 901-490-5825.

WOMEN

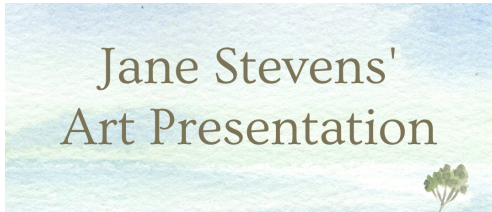


Girls' Night Out: Charcuterie Board Night

Thursday, July 14

6:30–8:30 p.m., Fellowship Hall

Come learn how to make beautiful displays of food and fellowship with other women while you practice your new skills. Bring school supplies to benefit *Youth Striving For Excellence*. Find a list of supplies and register at www.firstevan.org/women#gno. No childcare available.



“Hebrews: A Better Way”

Tuesday, July 12

9:30–11:30 a.m., Chapel

Jane Stevens will present a Biblical art presentation beautifully summarizing the book of Hebrews. Register at www.firstevan.org/women.

Gals and Galleries

Jenna Fergus will once again lead some groups to visit different art museums. Contact Jenna Fergus, jafergus4u@gmail.com, to sign up or for more information.

Dixon Gallery and Gardens

Friday, July 8, 10:00–11:30 a.m.

We will explore the ideas of color and abstraction through a Biblical mindset. Why is color important to us? How can we use it to communicate our love for God? Admission is free. Lunch and discussion afterwards.

Crystal Bridges, August 18–21

We are considering a trip to Crystal Bridges in Bentonville, AR. Contact Jenna Fergus if interested.



Women's Fall Kickoff

Sunday, August 14

9:30–10:30 a.m., Fellowship Hall

Back by popular demand (formerly the All Women's Event). Join us for the Women's Fall Kickoff for fellowship, food, and a message from Crickett about our theme and upcoming events for the year. This is always a highlight as the women of the church come together for this special time.



Girls' Getaway

Friday–Sunday, September 16–18

Marriott Shoals Hotel and Spa

Florence, AL

Join us for rest, fun, and fellowship. Our speaker will be Erica Wiggenhorn (www.ericawiggenhorn.com). Registration begins Sunday, July 17, in the Fellowship Hall and online: www.firstevan.org/girls-getaway.

Heart to Heart Bible Study

“Rooted: Growing Deep in

Your Faith” written by

Crickett Keeth

Tuesdays, September 13–

November 15, 9:30–11:30 a.m.

Fellowship Hall or

Wednesdays, September 14–

November 16, 6:15–8:00 p.m., Chapel

Join us for this 9-week Bible study designed to take you deeper in your walk with God. Divided into three sections (The Foundation, The Growth, and The Fruit-bearing), this study will walk you through ways we need to be rooted in order to bear fruit for God's Kingdom. Visit www.firstevan.org/h2h for more details.

STUDENTS



Birmingham Mission Trip

This past month, Student Ministries went to Birmingham, AL for a mission trip. All week, each group got to serve in different capacities. Some groups went to food banks, thrift store ministries, Vacation Bible Schools, and some even had the opportunity to go to individuals' homes to paint the exterior of homes. It was such an encouraging week to watch our students serve the community in the greater-Birmingham area. We loved watching the way God worked throughout the community, our students, and our leaders. Watch the highlight video at www.firstevan.org/students.

Day of Service

Fridays, July 1 and 15

11:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m., Meet at church

We are so excited because we have been given the opportunity to serve our community here in Memphis! We'll be serving at Streets Ministries, reading one-on-one with 2nd and 3rd graders at Camp Inspire. Afterwards we will enjoy a treat at MemPops.

Summer Schedule

We have a lot of exciting events happening this month. For details, visit www.firstevan.org/students or email aphillips@firstevan.org.

Midweek Kickoff

Wednesday, August 10

6:15–8:00 p.m., E202

Impact and Common Ground are combining to get the year started! This event is open to parents and students. During this time, we will play stage games and have the opportunity to worship together. You will also be able to meet small group leaders, observe what a typical student Midweek will look like throughout the year, and prepare your hearts to hear who we are, what we are about, and where we are going.

GLOBAL MISSIONS

Journeys to Unreached People Groups

by Pastor Ismail Kunda

Pastor Ismail Kunda (pictured fourth from the left in the striped tie) is a leader among the Sudanese Community here in Memphis. He attends First Evan and has previously pastored a local Sudanese/Arabic-speaking church. He tells a story of a recent trip he took to Sudan/South Sudan to take the gospel to people who have never heard the Good News.



On February 8, I took an Ethiopian airline from Washington D.C. and landed in Juba, South Sudan. I was to participate in an outreach to the Nuba Mountains, which is located in the very south of Sudan. I went with a group that is interested in helping the Sudanese Church to begin reaching those in the unreached region of the Western Nuba Mountains. I was happy to join the group because that region is dominated by spirit worshipers and others who can be dangerous to strangers.

When we had received legal permission from the Juba authorities to travel to the Nuba area, our journey through these unreached areas began. We brought the *Jesus Film* with us and showed it in different locations every evening. The villagers would happily come out to watch the film with great interest. After the show, I would step forward and explain why Jesus had come into the world in such a unique way and how he washed away our sins. Then, I would ask if any are willing to accept Jesus as their Savior. One of the team would lead them in the repentance prayer.

One of the very interesting stories in my trip this year is an 80-year-old man who gave his life to Jesus Christ. The man is a witch doctor. After his two younger brothers received Jesus, they rejected their older brother, based on the verse “Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers...” (2 Corinthians 8:14). Their brother, who used to take care of them as small kids, was very angry.

When our mission was ended, one of the younger brothers asked two of us to go with them to their brother’s home and restore their relationship. When we arrived, the old man shook hands with us, but neglected his brothers. After a short pause, we told him that we were there as mediators. We said, “Your brothers would like to express their deep sorrow and request you to accept reconciliation. They now believe that they wronged you.” He was mad and blamed them for their bad behavior. However, he finally agreed to hear from them.

I said, “Your brothers did not seek reconciliation until the time when they better understood the teaching of Jesus Christ. This means Jesus changes the hearts of those who accept his teaching. Now, before we ask them to apologize, we are going to close our eyes and say words of thanks to Jesus Christ for helping all of us to be part of this reconciliation. When your brothers hug you, we will again pray for you that Jesus will open your eyes and heart to see and know him, if you are willing, all heartedly to know him.”

Then, the brothers apologized and after hugging their brother, we asked the witch doctor to close his eyes. I laid my hand on him and my friend asked him to repeat the prayer of repentance after him. When we all said “Amen,” the old man was very happy. His face was shining with joy. He understood what repentance meant, because of the actions of his brothers.

I am so thankful to see the witch doctor being born again. Please remember him and his brothers in your prayers.



Monthly Meet & Greet

We would love for you to join as we fellowship with and encourage our Missionaries and National Partners! Times and days will vary. Below is the zoom info we will use for the meetings. Please stay tuned to social media and emails to get the latest update on who we will be meeting with and when. [Click here to join meetings](#). Meeting ID: 824 2619 1429; Passcode: 518957.



Missions Lunch

Sunday, July 24

12:00 p.m., Fellowship Hall

Join us as we share a meal and hear from Steve Winstead who is an FEC missionary in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. We will hear about what God is doing at International Evangelical Church where Steve pastors. We will also hear from David and Jessica in their ministry in a sensitive area.

MomentumYes Video Series

SAVE THE DATE: Wednesdays,
September 14–November 16
6:15–8:00 p.m., A121/122

MomentumYes is a free video-based series for small groups which teaches, inspires, and equips everyday people to rethink God’s mission. It is designed to actively engage believers in taking the next steps in God’s mission.

Missionary Care Fund

The Missionary Care Fund can be used to assist missionaries with expenses that are the result of unexpected circumstances and health-related issues. Your generous donation can help a family in a time of need. Please consider giving to the “**Missionary Care Fund**” by designating on check/offering card.

JULY 2022

					FRIDAY	SATURDAY
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	1	2
3 FEC Prayer Focus 5:00-5:30 p.m., Zoom	4 Church Offices Closed For Independence Day	5 FEC Kids Terrific Tuesdays 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. East Lawn (water day) YA Fair Game 7:00 p.m., The Hall's Home	6 CG & Impact Slip 'n Slide Kickball 6:15-8:00 p.m., The East Lawn	7	8 Gals & Galleries 10:00-11:30 a.m. Dixon Gallery & Gardens	9
10 Communion FEC Prayer Focus 5:00-5:30 p.m., Zoom	11 Council Meeting 6:15 p.m., Fellowship Hall	12 Jane Stevens' Art Presentation 9:30-11:30 a.m., Chapel Terrific Tuesdays 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. YA Fair Game 7:00 p.m., The Hall's Home	13 Impact NatureTrek to Shelby Forest 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Meet at First Evan CG Cookout 6:00-8:00 p.m. The Rawlinson's House	14 Girls' Night Out: Charcuterie Boards 6:30 p.m., Fellowship Hall	15 Student Ministries Day of Service 11:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m., Meet in E226, Streets	16
17 FEC Prayer Focus 5:00-5:30 p.m., Zoom	18	19 FEC Kids Terrific Tuesdays 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. East Lawn YA Fair Game 7:00 p.m., The Hall's Home	20 Impact Backwards Night 6:15-8:00 p.m. Meet at First Evan CG Ultimate Frisbee Night 6:15-8:00 p.m., East Lawn	21 FEC Kids Pastors' Pals with Pastor Jake Ferwerda 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. Big River Crossing	22 Miss Impact 7:00 p.m.-6:30 a.m., Meet in Gym Lobby >>> Impact Guys Overnighter 7:00 p.m.-7:00 a.m., Meet in Gym Lobby	23
24 Missions Lunch 12:00 p.m. F- Hall Baptism FEC Prayer Focus 5:00-5:30 p.m., Zoom	25	26 FEC Kids Terrific Tuesdays 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. East Lawn YA Fair Game 7:00 p.m., The Hall's Home	27 Impact World Record Night 6:15-8:00 p.m., E226 CG Day Trip to Little Rock 6:00 a.m.-10:00 p.m. Meet at the Gym	28 FEC Kids End of Summer Skate Party 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Cor- dova Skating Center	29	30